

Oppression!!!

THE APPEAL

O F
CAPTAIN PERRY,

(LATE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS,)

TO THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND;

CONTAINING

A JUSTIFICATION OF HIS PRINCIPLES AND CONDUCT
WHICH HAVE RENDERED HIM OBNOXIOUS TO MINI-
STERIAL TYRANNY; WITH A FEW REMARKS ON THE
PEOPLE OF FRANCE, TO REFUTE THE BASE CALUMNIES
OF THOSE INTERESTED IN THIS RUINOUS CRUSADE
AGAINST THE LIBERTY AND HAPPINESS OF MAN.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A DEVELOPMENT

OF SOME OF THE

MYSTERIES OF THE SPY TRADE,

PROVING THE DETESTABLE INIQUITY OF THE PRACTICE,
AND THE NECESSITY OF ITS IMMEDIATE ABOLITION.

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A D D R E S S, &c.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

IT was my intention to have said nothing of myself which could relate to the public, till I should have been regularly brought before it by my Prosecutors : but the day fixed, as I conceived, for my appearance in the Court of King's Bench being passed over, and the malevolence of certain venal Newspaper Conductors, with a view to flatter their Employers, having imputed my return home to causes foreign to the truth, I am necessarily forced to say something on the subject; as it is easy to learn, that all those who are in any degree solicitous to be informed, are filled with surmises, false rumours, and groundless conjectures.—I trust my Countrymen, you will not impute my Letter to motives of vanity, or a desire to be distinguished from the rest of my Fellow Sufferers. No, Citizens, whatever portion of vanity might heretofore have been my lot, I am now completely divested of its influence.

Humbly, but zealously to exert one's abilities, whatever they may be, in the cause of truth and of one's Country, is a situation to be envied; but importunately to rush into public notice to become conspicuous, is a position as much to be dreaded; and nothing but the most guarded conduct, the most complete command of the passions, can secure even to an honest man that lasting popular esteem which is the stimulus and the looked for recompence of every sincere Patriot.

The duty from Society to the individual, and from the individual to Society, is reciprocal; therefore, ere I urge the claim I am about to make on Society, it behoves me to prove, or at least to shew my readiness to enter into the proof, that I have not forfeited my right to its protection.

It will be made manifest that I am oppressed, and I feel my own power inadequate to remove that oppression.

It is one of the wise maxims which the new order of things in a neighbouring country, has established, and it cannot be too often repeated, that "when one of the members of the Community labours under oppression the whole Community suffers." Under this axiom, which is equally a leading truth in all States, I am encouraged to appeal to my Country.

The laws of a free State are intended to express the public will. Should they become, either by their own nature, or through an improper administration, more severe than the public welfare requires, they are to be revised, and by public consent attenuated to the public good; when, however, their wholesome operation is vitiated for partial purposes, or their usual course perverted

perverted by arbitrary Magistrates, then is it necessary that the jealousy of each Citizen should be awakened to repress the dangerous encroachment, since no one member of Society can be said to be secure from the undue exercise of so dangerous a power.

Attorneys General, or other Law Officers, are but mandatories or proxies for the public in the administration of the law ; they ought not to give it more force than the public will has allowed, nor ought they to give it an accelerated movement to gratify the resentment, or indulge the vengeance of any persons, however distinguished in rank, or elevated by office ; the application of the law, by any public officer to the detriment of an individual, except for the public good, is a wanton exercise of power and an abuse of public trust. Let us then see, whether such an unwarrantable stretch of authority has not been exercised in my case ; if it has, you will, as I do, consider it the cause of the public, and I shall expect to be restored by my Fellow Citizens to my lost rank as a freeman ; if otherwise, I shall be contented to have gained experience from my too eager zeal, which has drawn upon me so much calamity, and finally derive the necessary consolation from the purity of my intention, and the total exemption from the smallest portion of conscious guilt.

There have been Statesmen, or rather such as would be thought Statesmen, who have conceived they should give importance to an affair by the important manner of their treating it, like certain young physicians, who pull out a stop watch to count the pulse of the patient in a Diairhœa or other trifling disorder, thereby hoping to increase the

the fame of the doctor, by magnifying the danger of the disease.

I will not unnecessarily, take up the time of the reader, or the space in the paper, to say more of the commencement of these *legal* persecutions, than to observe, that before I had finished the year's imprisonment in the King's Bench, and paid the fine of three hundred pounds, I was served with a fresh process from the Attorney General's Office, for inserting a paragraph in the *ARGUS*, in which it was said, "that the House of Commons was not composed of the *bona fide* Representatives of the People."

When the Attorney General made out his *ex officio* information against me, he was not sparing of conjecture in order to fill up the innuendoes of his case; it may therefore be allowed me, in my turn, to form an opinion of the cause of his uncommon earnestness in his prosecutions against me. My paper had certainly descended with freedom on the conduct of Ministers, from the time of the Spanish Armament, to the eve of the present war. I had directed my animadversions to two main points, concerning which I never changed my opinion: they were, first the necessity of yielding to the demands of a very great majority of the people for a reform in the Representation, and the correcting acknowledged abuses in the Government. And the second, by the no less urgent necessity of a speedy change of measures with respect to the threatened interference of the Government in the internal affairs of France.

I do not arrogate to myself any exclusive credit for predicting all the evils which have accrued to us from time to time, by so unhappy, so unjustifiable

justifiable a war; for I am persuaded every disinterested man who would have taken time to reflect on the probable issue of such a conduct as our rulers have adopted, must have foreseen them as well as myself. It was plain, therefore, that my paper was inimical to the views of Ministers: while it advocated the rights of the people, it claimed a reform in the abuses of Government, so that it became no difficult matter in the Attorney General, as soon as it was the wish of Ministers, to select paragraphs here and there, which might by *inuendoes* be construed as libels on Government, or as having a seditious tendency.

What my fellow Citizens, is a libel on Government? Why telling the truth of it, and thereby exposing its defects to every man's understanding. What is sedition? Why, exciting dislike to the Government as it exists at present; and can you detail the abuses which are so palpable in it without exciting such dislike? and will you be induced to reform its abuses without first feeling a dislike thereto? For surely no man, the rankest flatterer of those who profit by the abuses spoken of, will be hardy enough to say such Government can exist a long time, without the desired reform be complied with.

It is evident then, that to complain of the Government is to be seditious, and that writers so complaining will be brought to punishment by the Attorney-General, as long as a Jury shall say, "The Government is good enough, and no man shall with impunity complain of it."

I am, therefore, a seditious person, as long as you, my fellow Citizens, shall think proper to allow me to be so called; for out of you the

Jury

Jury must be taken to pronounce an opinion on me, as well as on all men so accused. Or the Minister may say, I libel him by declaring that he has not talents or capacity to save my wretched country from its suspended fate; be it so; this I must submit to also as long as a *Special Jury*, not taken from among you indiscriminately, but provided by the Solicitor of the Crown Office, shall think it *proper* to have it so.

To return to the moment when the vengeance of my adversaries was to crush me and the *Argus* together.—I was apprised that numerous informations were filing by the Attorney-General, and even indictments perferring against me, so that no bail but to a large amount would be taken; I have already observed, that it was easy to call my writing *libellous* or *seditious*, and consequently fifty *ex officio* informations might have been served upon me, if Ministers and the Attorney-General had been disposed thereto; a proceeding sufficient to reduce even the richest Army Contractor to utter ruin; and most assuredly if my papers had been scrupulously looked over, so many paragraphs might have been found by the perspicacity of a legal inquisitor which had animadverted on the defects of government. I was then advised to withdraw, at least till I should be assured of the requisite bail, so as to secure me on those indictments, or other proceedings, from being sent immediately to prison. It was now, my Fellow Citizens, that the measure was adopted which chiefly occasions my thus addressing myself to you publicly.

The Secretary of State directs the Treasury Solicitor to issue a Proclamation, or
Advertisement

Advertisement, in the Gazette, offering a reward of a Hundred Pounds for apprehending me, as though I had been guilty of some enormous crime; thus the public's money is employed to hunt down a Citizen, whose greatest boast is the devoting his time and his means to the public interest, and thus by this Ministerial Anathema, every man's hand was as it were raised against me, and I was proscribed that community of which I was a member, without a trial, or hearing, or even a specification of crime.

It is unnecessary to enlarge upon the effect of such multiplied persecution; the proclamation of the Secretary of State, the Information of the Attorney General, the extent of the Stamp Office, and in short the seizure of every part of my property, were amply sufficient to drive me from my concerns, my family, and my country, and a Newspaper, Printing Office, &c. established at the expence of upwards of Four Thousand Pounds, were thrown into utter ruin.

I come now to that part of my conduct which has been the subject of an ill-natured remark by a Newspaper Conductor, in the *praise* if not in the *pay* of Ministers. He told his readers, with a malignant joy, which only such men can feel, that on my return from France, I had been taken up in consequence of the Gazette Proclamation, and my seditious writings; and that I had resolved to be the Inhabitant of a cell in Newgate, rather than stay longer in a country detestable for its Government and its morals.

This is a libel on a nation and an outrage on truth at the same time; for the Government of that country, when I left it, was assuming the most benign

form and order. I had suffered many hardships, 'tis true, and had incurred many dangers during the great political tempest in France. I had been shut up in houses of arrestation for 14 months, as were the natives of every country at war with the republic, but all this excited no disgust or reproach in me; every person, natives and strangers, suffered unavoidably, as well from the common calamities of War and civil commotion, as from the ephemeral tyranny of men who are now no more; but it is wicked and unjust to say, that the morals of the people drove me away, and made me prefer the prosecution of my enemies here, to a residence there; it is but doing common justice to the French people, to remark, that they one and all lament that our countrymen have had to sustain so long an imprisonment, and they do every thing in their power to make them forget their past sufferings. They are conciliating and kind, and it is no over-strained metaphor, to add that if the flame, the terrible flame which has raged with so much violence, has consumed much, it has not failed to purify that which it has left behind.

It was impossible for me to come home before I was set at liberty. My great anxiety on account of the few friends I had in England, the total inactivity of my life out of it, and above all, the hope that my countrymen were now become qualified to judge between their *real* and their *pretended* Patriots, were motives enough for me to hazard my liberty in regaining my satisfaction of mind; and I believe I may say of myself, what may not be said of my enemies, should they ever be in my situation, that imprisonment does not disturb

turb my conscience, or change my way of thinking.

" My mind on its own centre stands unmov'd,
" And stable as the fabric of the world."

When the principles of men are pure neither prisons nor poverty have any effect on them.

But, fellow Citizens, it is time I brought my letter to a conclusion: my appeal to you is founded on my right as an integral part of the Community, for the protection or punishment of each of which Members, the laws by common consent are enacted. You are sensible that the proceedings against me have been extraordinary and severe, not to be justified upon the mere ground or accusation of seditious or libellous writings. I call therefore upon you, to urge my prosecutors to defend their conduct, by producing their charge and substantiating their proof. I ought either to be condemned or set at liberty: I am ready for the one or the other.

I was first told I should be examined before the Privy Council; and I was asked if I would answer any questions when there? I replied, that I would as many as could be proposed to me, provided some public person like Mr. GURNEY (though I never saw him) were allowed to take down notes of the interrogatories, and my answers, so as that they might not be mutilated or misrepresented to the Public.

I have heard no mention since of the Privy Council, but I am now informed that the Court of King's Bench must be moved by me to reverse the Outlawry, which the Prosecution has been carried to in my absence, before any other step can be taken. Nothing but money can move the

King's Bench, or any other Court of Law. It must, therefore, of necessity, remain unmoved by me, and I may remain here unmoved, for I feel no shame in saying the *Law* and the Courts have deprived me of the only impulse which is likely to move them in my favour.

But, Fellow Citizens, I should be ashamed if it were understood, that by this frank avowal of my incapacity to pay the expence in the pursuit of legal justice; that I have the most distant thought of throwing myself on the bounty of the public, or have any views whatever of remuneration for my loss in the Common Cause. Men at all times ought to have their claims and their necessities well established, who receive assistance from the public bounty, otherwise they are to be suspected. I want only my liberty, or if I must still be imprisoned, I will be contented with little more than my daily bread ; I have but few wants ; that man is no patriot who has many ; and he who serves the cause of liberty with the hope of pecuniary indemnification, does not serve it from principle ; but if a Member of the community loses his liberty in struggling for the common cause, he may be allowed to call upon that community to assist him in its recovery.

This my Countrymen, is a brief and true state of the case of one of your Fellow Citizens, who has been dragged forcibly out of his Room by four Bow-street Runners, without any Warrant whatever, in defiance of the Bill of Rights, and of the Constitution ; which acknowledges a Man's House to be his Castle, though it be a thatched Cottage, or a Hut inclosed with Reeds— who desires to receive his Sentence, or his Liberty,

ty, that he may patiently resign himself to his fate, or be allowed to retire into obscurity, and breathe the fresh air, having scarce seen a green leaf of a tree, or trodden on a blade of grass these four Summers.

S. PERRY.

Felon fide of Newgate,
APRIL 25, 1795.



A Copy

A Copy of a LETTER which appeared in the TELEGRAPH, January 20th, 1795, and read by Mr. JEKYLL, in the House of Commons; in the Debate upon the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act; on Friday, January 23d, 1795.

“ TO THE EDITOR,

“ SIR,

“ HAVING had the misfortune to be applied to on the part of Ministry, by Mr. William Metcalfe, of No. 6, Dowgate-hill, to become one of the numerous Spies by which the present *virtuous* Administration are supported, I conceive the best mode of avoiding their *courtly importunity*, without falling a *victim* to their disappointment, will be by laying the proposals before the Public at once.

“ The application was made to me on Sunday, 4th inst. when Mr. Metcalfe, visiting my humble dwelling, after some *ridicule*, and *jokes on public virtue*, observed, that Government already had one *Spy* in the Committee of Correspondence, but they wished to have *another*, to report the proceedings, that they might be assured of his *fidelity or treachery*.

“ So anxious was the tempter for the success of his *snare*, that his visit was renewed on Tuesday, when I not being at home, he again came on Wednesday; not being at home this time either, he left

left word, that I should call upon him at his house, and he would wait my *arrival* at any time in the afternoon ; not choosing to do this, I received a fourth visit on *Thursday*, when he again urged his proposals, offering to introduce me to *Mr. Ford*, at the Duke of *Portland's* Office, Whitehall ; or to receive any information himself, at his own house, under cover ; that if I would accept the offer, I should have *fifty guineas prompt payment*, and *one guinea regularly for each weekly report*.

" Such an offer might have staggered one who had not, by his long *attendance* on the meetings of the Corresponding Society, been *confirmed* in his reverence of *public virtue*, and his contempt of every venal worshipper of *self-love* ;—If he had not known the excellent anecdote of *Andrew Marvell* who, when offered a thousand pounds on the part of the *King*, by *Lord Danby*, to induce him to betray his country, with scorn rejected the offer, though obliged immediately after the departure of the Lord Treasurer, to borrow a guinea of a friend ;—If he had not already sacrificed the means of *subsistence* for the sake of acting as *Reason* and *Conscience* directed him ;*—If he had not

* In July last the author of the above letter was dismissed from a situation he had long held under the East-India Company, on account of his *political principles*. It is not, however, meant by this note to reflect on the character of the Gentlemen in the direction of its vast commercial concerns, who were induced to deprive him of his livelihood ; since the writer is well aware that it was the consequence of the *malicious zeal*, and wicked *misperception* of those, in whom, at *that time*, a confidence was placed, which has since been found to have been abused.

recollected, from what appeared on the late trials, that one of the supposed *duties* of such men was to swear just what their *employers* required of them;—More especially, if he had not recollected the warning fate of *Watt*, of *Edinburgh*, a fate surely which ought ever to be before the eyes of all who are concerned in the system of *espionage*.

“ But such an offer had no other effect on me, than to sink still lower in my estimation, those, who support a falling cause by means so foul and treacherous. Poor as I may be, I would sooner be what I am than *that man* who, wallowing with *his whole family* in enormous wealth, extorted by *extravagant salaries* and *unmerited pensions*, hourly provokes the curses of that people, who suffer from the wanton prodigality with which he disposes, not only of their *riches*, but *their blood*, in the frantic prosecution of a war, which has already been *properly indeed* termed, *a War of Extermination!* ”

“ J. BURKS, Bookseller,
No. 52, Crispin-Street, Spitalfields;
Jan. 14th. 1795. Secretary to the London Corresponding Society.

“ P. S. The above Mr. Metcalf is the person who used every endeavour, previous to the late trials, to procure himself to be entrusted with the defence of the State Prisoners.”

